INTRODUCTION

Much of what is profoundly American – what people love about America has come from the Delta.

The Lower Mississippi Delta is a vast and vital part of the American landscape. This broad, alluvial valley reaches from southern Illinois to the southeastern tip of Louisiana, covers more than 90,000 miles of rivers and streams, more than 3 million acres of land, and dictates much of the region's landscape and land use. The Delta forms the most important bird and waterfowl migration corridor on the continent and supports North America's largest wetland area and bottomland hardwood forest.

The Delta's cultural traditions are as rich and diverse as its natural resources. This is a land of converging cultures with a unique complexity and density of history, prehistory, and cultural expression. Over the centuries American Indians, French, Arab, Spanish, African, German, English, Irish, Scots-Irish, Jewish, Italian, Chinese, Mexican, and Southeast Asian peoples have established and maintained their distinctive ethnic identities. Often these cultures intermingled to form discreet, new cultural elements found only in the Delta.

Millions of travelers visit the Delta each year and provide over $17 billion in direct revenue to counties and parishes. Nearly 300,000 jobs are travel-related with a payroll of over $3 billion. Heritage tourism development, which seeks to expand and revitalize urban and rural economic development opportunities through the preservation, management, and utilization of natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources, presents one opportunity for achieving economic gain in the Delta.

This volume II of the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Heritage Study is a companion document to volume I, which was released to the public in March 1998. Together the volumes represent one of the National Park Service's responses to Title XI — Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives passed by Congress in 1994.

Volume I contains background information on the study area, legislative mandates, concepts, and management alternatives for conserving, managing, and using the heritage resources of the Delta. This second volume contains cultural and historical, natural, recreational, and economic overviews of the Delta and an analysis on more than 2,000 resources that are now being preserved and used, or may offer opportunities for the future, to attract visitors to the Delta. The descriptions and analysis contained in the tables in the appendix form a database of information to guide those interested in developing heritage tourism initiatives in the Delta.

Although the resource tables may seem all inclusive, they *are not a complete listing* of all the cultural, natural, or historic resources of the Delta. Rather they represent a cross-section of the heritage resources found in this diverse and richly textured region. Cooperative efforts between local residents, businesses, and governments will be needed to achieve the full potential of heritage tourism opportunities illustrated by these diverse resources and to ensure the inclusion of all interested parties and sites.

Along with the analysis of resources, this volume also presents a comprehensive list of national natural landmarks, national historic landmarks and historic districts, and some of the recreational resources found in the Delta.

The two volumes of the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Heritage Study are meant to be used together. They give some insight into the complexity of the social, political, and natural environments of this very special part of the nation. Together the volumes create a base from which Congress might make decisions regarding future planning and/or implementation strategies related to heritage preservation and heritage tourism initiatives in the Delta.

Lower Mississippi Delta Region

Heritage Study

Study Area

MISSOURI
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
KY
TENNESSEE
ARKANSAS
MISSISSIPPI
LOUISIANA
ALABAMA
TEXAS
OKLAHOMA
FL

MISSOURI RIVER
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
OHIO RIVER
TENNESSEE RIVER
ARKANSAS RIVER
WHITE RIVER
WHITE RIVER
TALLAHATCHIE RIVER
YAZOO RIVER
RED RIVER
ATCHAFALAYA RIVER

EAST ST. LOUIS
ST. LOUIS
CHESTER
HARRISBURG
UNIONTOWN
ROLLA
STE. GENEVIEVE
FROHNA
ALTENBURG
CARBONDALE
HANSON
CAPE GIRARDEAU
PRINCETON
HOPKINSVILLE
CAIRO
PADUCAH
ELLSINORE
POPLAR BLUFF
MURRAY
WEST PLAINS
NEW MADRID
HICKMAN
EUREKA SPRINGS
FAYETTEVILLE
MOUNTAIN VIEW
BLYTHEVILLE
DYERSBURG
JONESBORO
HENNING
JACKSON
NEWPORT
FORT SMITH
MEMPHIS
FORREST CITY
FARGO
MADISON
CORINTH
HOLLY SPRINGS
LITTLE ROCK
HELENA
TUPELO
HOT SPRINGS
OXFORD
PINE BLUFF
CLARKSDALE
MOUND BAYOU
DUMAS
GREENWOOD
GREENVILLE
TEXARKANA
PHILADELPHIA
YAZOO CITY
MONROE
FLORA
MERIDIAN
SHREVEPORT
VICKSBURG
JACKSON
UTICA
NATCHITOCHES
VIDALIA
NATCHEZ
HATTIESBURG
ALEXANDRIA
WOODVILLE
MARKSVILLE
OPELOUSAS
BAKER
GULFPORT
BILOXI
ELTON
EUNICE
BATON ROUGE
PASCAGOULA
LAFAYETTE
NEW ORLEANS

40 40 40 57 55 24 55 40 30 61 55 20 20 49 61 55 59 12 10

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VIGNETTES OF THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION'S HERITAGE

A MULTICULTURED REGION

The diversity of the lower Mississippi Delta region's heritage is reflected in the names of cities and towns up and down the river — Ste. Genevieve, Kaskaskia, Altenburg, Wittenburg, Cape Girardeau, Cairo, Hickman, Helena, Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Venice. The Mississippi River and its associated bounty not only sustained the region's first inhabitants, the Indians, but have in succeeding centuries attracted immigrants from around the world.

Spanish claims to the Delta region originated with DeSoto's expedition in the early 1540s. Although their presence in the region was relatively short-lived, the Spanish left their cultural stamp on life in the Delta's southern reaches. For example, the French Quarter's noteworthy architecture has a definite Spanish influence.

Frenchman Sieur de la Salle descended the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico and claimed the entire watershed for Louis XIV in 1682. In 1686 a French settlement at Arkansas Post became the region's first permanent white settlement. When Pierre le Moyne Iberville brought colonists to present-day Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1699, the French established a line of posts and settlements from present-day Mobile, Alabama, New Orleans, and Ste. Genevieve northeastward to Detroit.

During the 18th century a substantial French presence developed throughout the Lower Mississippi Delta region. Descendant French populations still live in southern Illinois and Missouri, in such communities as Prairie du Rocher, Kaskaskia, Ste. Genevieve, and Cape Girardeau, as well as in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Acadian Louisiana. But perhaps the most unique of all the French descendants are the Acadians who arrived in Louisiana.

During Great Britian's conquest of the French empire in North America (1754–1763, the British expelled nearly 75%, or over 10,000, of the French Catholic Acadians from Nova Scotia. Many of the deported Acadians initially settled in the American colonies to the south or in France. However, the Acadians were not welcome either in the American colonies, where rampant anti-Catholicism and antipathy towards the French persisted, or in France, where native Frenchmen resented their government land allotments and pensions. Early in the 1780s, Spain offered the Acadians land in the Louisiana Territory to settle upon, and in 1785 approximately 1,600 Acadians departed France for the Spanish colony. Over the succeeding decades, Acadians continued to migrate to Louisiana from the United States, Canada, France, and the Caribbean, where some deported Acadians had also settled during the 18th century. Today, Acadian descendants are predominantly found in Louisiana and the New England region of the United States, Quebec, and the maritime provinces of Canada and in France (Minister of the Environmental-Parks Canada 1986).

Many of the Acadians who migrated to Louisiana settled in the eastern prairies and along Bayou Lafourche and the Lower Mississippi River to farm, fish, hunt, and trap, while interacting and intermarrying with their American, Spanish, Indian, and African-American neighbors. The social life of the French dialect speaking Acadians, or Cajuns as they became known, was centered on the hospitality and conviviality of their homes:

> Neighbors gathered periodically at *boucheries, coups-de-main*, weddings, and funerals. *Bals de maison* (house dances) were held often, attended mostly by young people. *VeillJes* (evening visits) were intensely anticipated by all. People regularly traveled many miles...to visit their friends. Oral entertainment — games, folk stories, music, and gossip — were highlights of the evening. . . . Food was an essential ingredient of all major social gatherings, including even dances and funerals. The foodways were dominated by hardy American foodstuffs — corn, rice, beans, cane syrup, melons, and potatoes, but prepared in the distinctive styles of the French Creole or Cajun (Ancelet 1991).

Today, Cajun cuisine and music, which has been transformed from its traditional 19th century character by the addition of the accordion, guitar, drums, and amplification (Ancelet 1991) are deeply embedded in Louisiana culture and are a unique component of the Delta region's heritage.

Also culturally distinctive within the lower Mississippi Delta region is the Creole population of Louisiana. The term Creole refers to a diversity of cultural groups. The white Creoles of colonial Louisiana were born of French and Spanish parents before 1803. White Creoles were generally landed gentry, who adopted and retained European mannerisms and enjoyed a cultured and sophisticated lifestyle. In central Louisiana the Cane River Creoles of color emerged from a family of freed slaves. The social stratum occupied by Creoles of color was unique to Louisiana. Some of the Cane River Creoles became wealthy plantation owners and developed their own unique culture, enjoying the respect and friendship of the dominant white Creole society. In the context of racial mixing, Creole could also refer to those of European-Indian descent in Louisiana (NPS 1993).

Besides the various groups mentioned above, many other immigrant groups have come to the Lower Mississippi Delta region seeking economic opportunity, including African-American freedmen and slaves. German immigrants created numerous communities along the Mississippi River above New Orleans and Sephardic Jews migrated to New Orleans from countries ringing the Mediterranean Sea. The Irish came to the Delta in the 1830s and were often considered more expendable than slaves. Irish day laborers were expected to work at the most dangerous and unpleasant jobs, such as heavy construction in malaria infested areas. By 1830 a small community of Filipinos had established a small fishing village in southern Louisiana. Transpiedmont Scots-Irish moved to the lower Delta from Virginia and the Caro-linas. Also in the 1830s, other Euro-Americans migrated from the east and southeastern U.S. to the Delta, which was then known as the "Southwest." Chinese laborers were recruited from New Orleans and Asia in

the 1870s. A decade later many Jewish, Sicilian, and Lebanese people migrated to the delta from southern and eastern Europe and a Syrian community was established in the Arkansas delta. A substantial Italian contingent settled in New Orleans in the late 19th century. In the 1950s Cubans moved to New Orleans and the migration of Vietnamese to south-ern Louisiana, many of whom became shrimpers, occurred in the 1970s.

The bayous of Louisiana and the rich lowland of the lower Mississippi Delta continue to lure immigrants. In the last decades of the twentieth century the patterns of immigration have once again shifted. The largest numbers of immigrants now stem from Mexico, the Philippines, Korea, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica. River cities and towns, challenged by changing economies that feature commercial enterprise and industry, rather than agriculture, are absorbing the newcomers. The racial and ethnic heritage of the lower Mississippi Delta region will continue to evolve on the streets and in the residential neighborhoods of the Delta.

DELTA CULTURES REFLECTED IN THE LANDSCAPE

Throughout the length and breath of the lower Mississippi Delta region, the towns reflect an allure, a presence, and a feeling all their own. According to Marie E. Meyer in 1926, "They have an air of permanence, these old river towns . . . Facing the river, they seem to belong to it, having no desire to climb the bluffs and live on the prairie beyond (Botkin 1955).

The Great River Road, a network of federal, state, and county roads paralleling the Mississippi River on both sides, offers access to both the river delta and its inhabi-tants. Driving through communities oriented to the Delta reveals dynamic relationships between people and the land. Many of these towns, quiet and isolated, have recently reclaimed their ties with the river — the flood walls have been beached allowing access to the river. These communities today actively seek visitors to come and share in their scenic and architectural delights, unchanged for so long.

The architectural diversity of the Delta towns is staggering. They reflect Spanish, French, British, German, and early American influences; they have survived floods and wars, and have escaped urban renewal. There are landed estates with Greek Revival homes, such as Melrose in Natchez, sugar plantations along Bayou Lafourche, and churches in Port Gibson. Architectural masterpieces abound: French colonial era structures in Ste. Genevieve and the Cane River area in northwestern Louisiana, the Great American Pyramid in Memphis, and the Vieux Carre' in New Orleans.

The lower Delta region's architectural heritage evokes a sense of the past defined by scale, materials, and layout. Some small Delta towns have physically taken only small steps out of the past century, or sometimes even two centuries. Ste. Genevieve, Kaskaskia Island, and Prairie du Rocher exude their French origins. Farmers and storekeepers swap stories in Chester, New Madrid, Hickman, Helena, Dyers-burg, Covington, Greenville, Yazoo City, and Plaquemine.

Historic farms and small towns are an important element of Delta culture and

architecture and there are many styles of folk buildings throughout the region, including dog trot, shotgun, Creole cottage, raised cottage, I-house, center passage house, and undercut galleries, plus barns and gins. For example, until the 1830s log cabins were found throughout Memphis, as well as in the Delta. Simple three-room cabins with full front porches are still fairly common. Sharecroppers were tied to the rural landscape and cabins. Since share-cropping is an extended form of economic slavery, houses, barns, gins, and related structures looked much as they did prior to the Civil War. "The quarters" is a rural plantation manifestation that consisted of a cluster or row of shotgun houses or cabins.

Several architectural features are important to the Delta region. The porch not only reflects the Delta climate's high temperatures and humidity, but also the influences of Caribbean and African architecture. Dog trot houses have breezeways to cool residents. In southern Louisiana Cajuns often lived in family clusters on prairies called coves, and informal camps consisting of a shack or hut serve as get-a-ways for hunting, fishing, and relaxing in southern Louisiana.

The region's distinctive nonresidential architecture includes churches, riverside warehouses, courthouses, country stores, rice mills, gins, and sugar mills.

Funerary design is a distinctive architectural form in the Delta region. European cemeteries were sometimes located on Native American mounds, some of which were prehistoric burial grounds. The exact origin of the aboveground burial vaults in New Orleans is unknown. They could be an adaptation to the high water tables or a reminder of the Spanish colonial period, but suffice it to say these burial grounds provide a fascinating lure to visitors.

The lower Mississippi Delta region's cultural landscape is composed of human and natural elements, combining sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. For instance the river grows into an overpowering feature as one travels ever southward:

> I believe only that Eden is still attainable, though not easily; that the Mississippi, great sewer, father of waters, master and slave of its self-created earth, is destined to become the true artery of a nation's impregnable heart (Carter 1942).

As the Mississippi River flows to the Gulf of Mexico, the relationship between land and water changes; it is no longer close and intimate, but broad and unknowable. The overwhelming defining feature in the lower Delta is the levee system running for hun-dreds of miles on both sides of the river. The lower river levee system is a compel-ling and eye-catching aspect of the land-scape and of southern culture. In New Orleans swamp drainage and reclamation altered the landscape dramatically. Residents built the city's first levees in 1718; now on the west side of the Mississippi River, a single continuous levee system extends from Cairo to the Gulf of Mexico.

But the Mississippi River was never tamed, as the levees failed to deter the river's periodic onslaughts. After the great flood of 1927, other human-engineered elements became part of the river landscape, includ-ing riverbanks stabilized with mats of willows, revetments, mattresses of wire-linked concrete slabs, dikes, floodways, and cutoff channels. During the 1973 flood the river threatened to take the shorter route to the Gulf of

Mexico via the Atacha-falaya River, but the Old River control structure, erected by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, held (barely). Twenty years later levees along the lower Missouri and Illinois segment of the lower Mississippi River Delta failed. Numerous farms and several farm villages such as Valmeyer, Illinois, have been relocated on higher ground since that disaster. The river is still the most significant, inspiring feature of the Lower Mississippi Delta region.

DELTA CULTURES IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

The lower Mississippi River Delta is an enduring theme in American literature. It is the source of great fiction and fancy, travel, history and tales — an inspiration to generations of writers. The Europeans who arrived to explore or exploit left accounts of the delta as well. Starting with members of Hernando de Soto's 1541 expedition, accounts of gold and glory, of death and disease provide a record of a river that now exists only in memory. Fathers Jacques Marquette and Louis Hennepin described the immense size of river, its natural state, and countless species of wildlife. Numerous other travelers have written of their personal discoveries by way of their physical and mental journeys through the unknown.

For more than two centuries travelers have described their journeys through the Delta. Jonathan Carver and Samuel S. Forman, in the latter decades of the 18th century, were followed by Zadoc Cramer, who described the delta in 1801. John Bradbury, Frances Trollope, and Charles Dickens recorded their impressions of the inhabitants and the river, and John James Audubon painted the avian life in this region during the early to mid-1800s. These 19th century traveling authors shared their impressions of the lower Delta country not only with Americans living in the East, but Europe as well.

Finally, the floodplain beyond the levees is an internationally recognized landscape feature. The Delta covers 35,000 square miles from southern Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico, encompassing 219 counties in seven states and approximately 8.3 million people. In northeastern Louisiana, western Mississippi, and southeastern Arkansas, mile after mile of rich, black, alluvial soil stretches before the eye. The Delta supports not only traditional agriculture, thriving communities, and new economic endeavors but an internationally artistic and cultural expression as well. Like the down home blues of Robert Johnson and Elmore James, the lower Mississippi Delta landscape retains its raw, earthy, isolated, sensory, and soulful ethos.

Historians, too, have chronicled the river and its hinterland's legacy, interpreting its meaning and significance in the development of the United States, including Francis Parkman and Herri de Tonti retelling the exploits of LaSalle; Clark Wissler's celebration of the American Indians; Ray Allen Billington's assessment of the Mississippi valley frontier; Frederick Jackson Turner's analysis of the Mississippi valley's significance on the course of American history; and John Francis McDermott's celebration of French culture and its accomplishments in the Mississippi valley. Others have chronicled lives of gambling and speculation, the romance of steamboats, the horrors of war, the tragedy of floods, and the river's supposed conquest by railroads and bridges, dams, and levees. Yet no contemporary historian has assumed the daunting task of researching and writing a historical synthesis of this

region. Historians have nibbled around the edges with useful monographs on music, the region's epicurean delights, Delta-based African-Americans' march towards racial equality, and other specialized topics, but none have interpreted this complex mosaic in context of America's growth and development.

Fictional and autobiographical interpretations of life throughout the Delta recall the sickness, adversity, wonder, and insight that Mississippi River Delta life brought to many. These accounts are cultural classics: Mark Twain learning how to "read" the river; William Alexander Percy walking the levees looking for "boils;" Lyle Saxon describing the "flotsam and jetsam, the riffraff of the world" who gathered above the barrooms of Gallatin Street in New Orleans; William Johnson, a freedman, detailing everyday life in antebellum Natchez; George Washington Cable's portrait of Louisiana Creoles; and John McPhee describing the near collapse of the Old River control structure during the 1973 flood.

There are also authors who grew up in the Mississippi Delta who chose to write about the Delta as well as other subjects. The Delta region is not central in their writings, but it contributes to the authors' outlook. For example, early feminist author Kate Chopin of St. Louis and New Orleans, wrote of a married woman's "awakening" in a repressive household set in St. Louis. Richard Wright depicted harsh truths about slavery, segregation, and racism, and his best known work, *Native Son*, is set in a burgeoning African-American community in Chicago, many of whose residents had migrated north from the lower Delta region. Also notable was Arna Bontemps, who depicted the lives and struggles of African-Americans and was a seminal contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, a period of vigorous literary creativity among African-Americans during the 1920s.

Other Delta-based or inspired authors include Mississippian natives William Faulkner, who used the Delta as the setting for his intricate novels, and Willie Morris, who embodies the southern tradition of backporch storytelling. Eudora Welty's stories of Southern family life evoke the Southern sense of place so often associated with Southern writers. Cape Fear resident Thomas "Tennessee" Williams shared his perceptions of the colorful delta characters he grew up with in rural Mississippi in his many plays. Historian Shelby Foote, of Greenville, Mississippi, enthralled readers with the personalities, ironies, and triumphs of the Civil War, and Alex Haley of Henning, Tennessee, poignantly depicted the struggles of African-Americans in his works of historical fiction. Contemporary best- selling author John Grisham uses the rich heritage of the Delta as a palette for his popular suspense novels. As Greenville, Mississippi, resident Hodding Carter noted in 1942, however, both the Mississippi River and the Southern Delta tradition remain elusive:

> . . . so many have written about the river . . . I have read what most have written, and without them I could not add another book to the list. Yet when you leave them you are still confused, for their eyes saw different things and at different times. The navigator tells his story and the explorer his, and the historian and the planter, the naturalist and the pilot and the soldier. The river is in all of them. But if you try to use them piecemeal, you find a patternless puzzle (Carter 1942).

From the earliest oral traditions Delta storytellers possessed a strong sense of place, of which the landscape, water, and heat formed the backdrop. Tragedy and melodrama are popular southern genres, and kinship and family are important themes in Delta literature. Southern class differences and racial conflict have also long given rise to written expression, and the themes of delta writers, especially the elementalism and focus on "blood, sweat and tears" reality, often parallel those of Delta blues songs.

Music and the lower Mississippi River delta are synonymous and, indeed, the Delta is the cradle of American music. Musical styles within the Delta region are diverse and it was here that the blues, Cajun music, jazz, and zydeco evolved. Yet best known around the world is the blues music of the lower Mississippi River Delta. Developed by people engaged in struggle, infused with spirit and speaking in dialect, the blues are rooted in African music and evolved from field hollars, the work songs of slaves that often carried deeply layered, coded messages. It is said that misery produces creativity and resiliency, and the blues is deeply rooted in the African-American experience and the rural settings of the Mississippi and Arkansas Deltas. The blues tell stories of frustrated love, broken homes, and other miseries of an oppressed and displaced people. The blues is a music of hardworking, exploited people and this distinct, indigenous music was largely developed by musicians with no formal training, but with an ear for the rhythms of their daily lives.

The blues were originally sung and performed throughout the Delta in fields and plantation shacks, churches, tent shows, and juke joints, many of which rarely exist today. Internationally known musicians and composers, such as W. C. Handy, Muddy Waters, Ike Turner, Sam Cooke, and Charlie Patton, performed in Clarksdale, Mississippi, along Issaquena by the tracks, a stretch called "The New World," and in such Clarksdale juke joints as Smitty's Red Top Lounge, Margaret's Blue Diamond Lounge, and Red's South End Disco. In Helena, Arkansas, juke joints such as the Hole in the Wall hosted blues players like Robert Johnson, Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Bobby Blue Bland, Elmore James, and Jimmy Rodgers — the "Mississippi Blue Yodeler." In the early 1940s Helena was home to the Delta's first major radio show with live blues being performed on King Biscuit Time. Today, Helena hosts the annual King Biscuit Blues Festival, which attracted some 100,000 music aficionados in August 1996.

The success of blues music, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Originally a rural sound and strongly connected to place, blues went unrecognized as commercially viable for years, due to racial prejudice and the subsuming of the blues under other types of music, such as jazz and rock & roll. As the Mississippi River facilitated the movement of people and their music all over America, major metropolitan areas along the river, such as New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, and Chicago soon shared similar musical forms. Later, the blues began to circulate the nation on the radio, first recorded in Memphis before the Depression and later in Chicago. Today rap music is a form of contemporary blues that draws upon past blues' themes and musicians, but old time Delta blues barely exists and is now mostly for new types of audiences.

Because cultural creativity in the Delta is synergistic, resulting from the region's European/African-American/Native American roots, the blues influenced other musical styles as well, including honky-tonk, boogie-woogie, country/ western, swamp pop, and rockabilly. Sun Records in Memphis promoted rockabilly artists Donny Burgess, Ronnie Hawkins, and others, while the clubs of Helena and West Memphis helped launch the careers of Johnny Cash, Charlie Rich, and Conway Twitty. Cousins Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swagert (the televangelist) and Mickey Gilley, raised in and near Ferriday, Louisiana, contributed to the temporal and spiritual musical mixture. Stax, Sun Studios, Millers and other delta recording companies brought the sounds of the Delta to the nation and world. For example, Elvis Presley, who came to musical maturity at Sun records in Memphis, took variants of blues music mainstream in the mid-1950s. Today, music festivals routinely celebrate the Delta region's varied musical heritage throughout the year, as well as at several celebrations in New Orleans, including Mardi Gras, the Po-Boy Blues Festival, the Louis Armstrong Classic Jazz Festival, and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Unique food preparation, a specialty of the region that is limited only by one's culinary desires, also defines the Delta. Festivals celebrating food, music, or both are numerous along the river.

"Livin' on the Levee" is an annual celebration of Delta food, music, and culture held in West Memphis, Arkansas. An annual Crawfish Festival is held in Dermott, Arkansas. Eudora, Arkansas, is the Catfish Capital of Arkansas, with an annual festival as well. Louisiana's tourism slogan is "We're Really Cookin"! The state as a whole boasts regional food with national gusto. The diversity of Louisiana food ranges from northern home cooking to authentic Cajun/Creole cuisine in the south. Frequently copied recipes include black iron skillet cornbread, Louisiana pecan pie, Cajun seafood jambalaya, spinach madeleine, and crabmeat and corn bisque.

Just as the lower Mississippi River provides nourishment for plants and animals, the Delta region provides inspiration for the cultural life of people who live there. The Delta's image is reflected literally, figuratively, spiritually, and musically in the rich lives and diverse expressions of its residents.

INDIANS — THE REGION'S FIRST INHABITANTS

By now it is a cliche to say that the "New World" was anything but new when Columbus arrived, but less well known is the sheer breadth of the pre-Columbian civilizations. Millions of people inhabited the Americas in 1492, most densely along the coasts and major rivers, and these indigenous peoples, or American Indians, were the original discoverers, explorers, and settlers of the New World. They spoke over 600 distinct languages. Indian economies varied from farming, to maritime, to hunters and gatherers, and Indian artisans were adept at weaving, carving, sculpting, and painting. The pre-Columbian Americas were a teeming world of life — a rich tapestry of cultures with diverse economies, complex religious cosmologies, and sophisticated arts and crafts (Josephy 1994).

Though the date that humans first trod upon the North American continent is

unknown, contemporary scientific and archeological data suggests that the earliest American Indians migrated eastward across Asia and apparently began crossing from present-day Siberia to Alaska via an ancient land bridge, sometime between 10,000 to 70,000 years ago. Rising ocean waters, precipitated by melting glaciers, eventually submerged the land bridge, but subsequent generations continued the migration by navigating the narrow Bering Strait. Many of the migrants gradually spread southward ". . . across the American landmass, exploring the ten thousand miles from the Arctic to Cape Horn, . . . adjust(ing) and adapt(ing) to regional extremes of temperature and climate, to the mountains, the deserts, the woodlands, and the prairies" (Thomas 1993).

Mississippian is the term with which archeologists label the diverse pre-European contact societies of Indians who eventually inhabited the fertile river valleys of the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Missis-sippi Rivers in what is now the southeast-ern United States, extending as far west and north as present-day Oklahoma and Wisconsin, respectively. From approxi-mately A.D. 700 to the arrival of the first European explorers during the 16th century, the mound building Mississip-pians thrived, sustained primarily by the hand-farming of both native plant crops and, beginning sometime between approxi-mately A.D. 800–1100, the nonindigenous maize, or corn, which was first domesti-cated by Indians in the semiarid lands of present-day Mexico (Thomas 1993). Farm-ing corn enabled the Mississippians to produce food surpluses, which gradually transformed their lifeways, yielding more complex social, political, and economic relationships:

> As (the Mississippian Indians) became more agricultural, they came to rely more heavily on centralized authority and economic redistribution. At the same time, as economic and social controls became more concentrated, larger agricultural surpluses were needed to support the infrastructure. Mississippian society entered a positive feedback cycle. Change required more change . . . (and) . . . (t)he Mississip-pian people responded to the challenge. They reorganized their settlements into ranked hierarchies, reflecting in their spatial arrangements the increasing social distance between nobles and commoners. . . .Atop huge, flat-topped mounds, eastern native American aristocrats presided over the ceremonies and rituals that codified the Mississippian lifeway. Townspeople supported their royalty, setting them apart from commoners both socially and politically. Although Mississippian communities remained largely autonomous, their extensive economic and kin ties created far-flung alliances, which, in turn, created rivalries. But (unlike European forms of conquest) when rivalry broke out into open conflict, Mississippian warlords exacted tribute and allegiance, allowing the vanquished to remain on their land. . . . As political and social ranking proliferated, the Mississippian mindset was increasingly reinforced by ceremony and sacrament. These beliefs expressed ancestral obligations, celebrated successful harvests, hunts, and warfare, and reinforced esteem for social leaders through elaborate mortuary ritual (Thomas 1993).

At the time the Spaniard Hernando de Soto and his expeditionary army landed on the west coast of present-day Florida in 1539, many of the leading Mississippian centers, e.g., Etowah (Georgia), Spiro (Oklahoma), Moundville (Alabama), and Cahokia (Illinois), were already in decline. Yet, as de Soto's army slogged overland through the Southeast to the Mississippi River, bloody encounters between the Mississippians and the Spanish expedition presaged the Indians eventual loss of their lands and lifeways, as Europeans increasingly penetrated the continent over the succeeding centuries. Even more devastating was the onslaught of the microbe. European contact, beginning with de Soto's expedition, introduced virulent diseases among the Mississippian Indians, for which they had no immunity. Ravaged by epidemics of smallpox and malaria and infections such as typhoid fever, measles, syphilis, and tuberculosis, the Mississippian population plummeted (Thomas, Josephy, and Miller 1993). As a result of depopulation, the surviving Mississippians, who were refugees in their own land, began uniting into new communities, or what the British and Americans would term "tribes."

> In Georgia and Alabama, a confederation of many refugee groups came to be dominated by the Creeks (as the English called them). Other descendants of the mound-building Mississippians became the Chickasaws, the Seminoles, and the Choctaws. Still other refugees, the Cherokees, came to occupy the hill and mountain country of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee . . . (becoming) . . . the largest tribe in the Southeast. . . (Thomas 1993; Miller 1993).

By the 18th century, the French, for whom Sieur de LaSalle had claimed the whole of the Mississippi Valley to the Gulf of Mexico in 1682, perceived the role and purpose of the New World as a source of great enrichment for the Crown and aristocrats at home. The lands and the Indians who occupied them existed merely for rapid exploitation. One of the most ruthless examples of such exploitation was the French treatment of the Natchez Indians, ". . . the closest of any eighteenth-century Indian nation in the Southeast to the Mississippian cultures encountered by the first Spanish explorers." In 1716, the French established a colonial settlement on the bluffs of present-day Natchez, Mississippi, safe from flooding, easily defensible, near fertile lands, and overlooking an extensive waterway for transportation and trade. The early settlement included a palisade, Fort Rosalie. In response to French attempts to seize their lands, the Natchez Indians massacred the settlers and burned the fort in 1729. French retaliation was swift and final, exemplifying the ". . . cycle of European aggression, Indian retaliation, and war that would become all too familiar between whites and Indians later in the century." By 1732 the Natchez Indians had been all but eliminated from the area that today bears their name, either killed, sold into slavery, or assimilated into other regional tribal groups, such as the Chickasaws (White 1993).

The ongoing rivalry between Great Britain and France throughout the 18th century posed increasing perils for all Indians east of the Mississippi River, as the British and French intermittently engaged in warfare for empire wherever they met. As Great Britain and France increasingly vied for territory and trade in the New World, North America became a battleground for

two countries already at odds. The British and French clashed first over the allegiance of the Indian tribes between the Appala-chians and the Mississippi River, then over the lands in the vast drainage basins of the Mississippi, and ultimately over the whole of North America. A series of four world wars, which began in Europe in 1689 and culminated in the what was known as the French and Indian War in America and the Seven Years' War in Europe (1756-1763), finally decided the future of North America in favor of the British and the Americans. By the Treaty of Paris, concluded in February 1763, Great Britain acquired from France all of Canada and the interior east of the Mississippi except for the port of New Orleans. Spain, which was induced by France to enter the war against the British, yielded the Florida territory to Great Britain in return for the restoration of Cuba, which the British overran the year before. France compensated its ally by ceding all French territories west of the Mississippi to Spain (White 1993; Joesphy 1994).

As Great Britain struggled to address the disposition of its newly acquired western frontier and the Indians who inhabited the lands, the British government issued the Proclamation of 1763 in October, intended as a temporary measure until a permanent policy could be worked out. The Proclamation established boundaries for three new crown colonies: Quebec, East Florida, and West Florida. All other western territory, from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi River and from Florida to 500 north latitude, was reserved for the Indians, to the chagrin of fur traders, settlers, and land speculators alike. The restrictive frontier policy was especially galling to the planters of the South. By concentrating on their one money-making crop, the Virginia tobacco planters in particular had so depleted the soil that cheap lands farther west seemed their only salvation (White 1993; Josephy 1994).

A proclamation issued an ocean away, however, could not be enforced by the small British presence in America. Many colonial Americans agreed with George Washington's declaration that the proclamation be ignored: "I can never look upon that proclamation in any other light . . . than as a temporary expedient to quiet the minds of the Indians. . . . Any person, therefore, who neglects the present opportunity of hunting out good lands . . . will never regain it" (Harwell 1968). The settlers who edged ever westward regarded the Indians as little more than an encumbrance to be removed, and by the turn-of-the century, an Indian war was imminent in the American territory north of the Floridas.

Throughout the 18th and into the early 19th centuries, Indian tribes along the frontier were deceived into making land concessions through treaties they little understood, yielding tens of millions of acres in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys by the 1810s. As the force of American arms gradually "quieted" Indian title to the land, the uprooted Creeks, Cherokees, Kaskaskias, Shawnees, and others migrated westward to an inhospitable welcome on the lands of the Sioux and Chippewas, who resented their presence. When war broke out between the United States and Great Britain in 1812, an aggressive Tennessee militia commander named Andrew Jackson warred against the Indians in the southeast while waiting to check any British cam-paign in the region. After routing the Creeks in March 1814 at the battle of Horseshoe Bend in central

Alabama, Jackson seized millions of acres of their land and erected Fort Jackson on Hickory Ground, a sacred spot of the Creek Nation. The fervor with which Jackson fought Indians and his army's defeat of the British at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815 transformed him into the most popular national hero since George Washington (White, Joesphy, and Nash 1992).

Jackson's Indian-fighting days, however, were far from over. In 1817 the now General Jackson and an army of militia invaded Spanish Florida, a haven for the Creeks and Seminoles who threatened the security of American settlers in Georgia. After burning Indian villages and hanging several Indian chiefs, Jackson took it upon himself to march on Pensacola, oust the Spanish territorial governor, and claimed the territory for the United States. The outraged Spanish government, hamstrung by unrest at home and rebellion in Latin America, could muster only a weak diplomatic response and soon after agreed to cede Florida to the United States through the Adams-Onis Treaty, which also established the boundary between the United States and Mexico all the way to the Pacific (Josephy and Nabokov 1993).

Though the nation's northern and southern boundaries were established by treaties with Great Britain and Spain, respectively, and by the acquisition of Florida, the lands could not be widely settled until the Indians who still occupied them were either subjugated or expelled. In the southeast, the federal government, which had little sympathy for the Indian culture, offered Indian tribes the choice of assimilation, of adopting the ways of white society and changing from a hunting and farming economy to one of settled agriculture, or of moving west. To the consternation of land hungry settlers, many of the Indians preferred acculturation to abandoning their ancestral lands (White 1993 and Josephy 1993).

The most acculturated of the southeastern Indians were the Cherokee. At the outset of the 19th century, the Cherokee occupied vast tracts of land in Georgia, Tennessee, and the western Carolinas. As their land base shrunk, however, Cherokee elders decided that accommodation rather than resistance offered the best hope for their people's survival. In 1808 the Cherokee conceived a written legal code exhibiting elements of common and Indian law, and in 1816 missionaries opened a boarding school for Cherokee youth near present-day Chattanooga and began baptizing students into the Christian faith. By 1827 the Cherokee nation had adopted a written constitution similar to those of nearby states, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and were publishing a tribal newspaper. Increasingly Cherokees abandoned community settlements to establish individual farmsteads, and many of those who undertook the cultivation of cotton became slaveholders. Though the Cherokee, and to a lesser extent the other Indians of the so-called five "civilized tribes" (the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek), embraced many of the ways of the white America, the Indians, who were bound to the land by centuries of discovery and settlement, were soon to be ousted from their lands with the ascendancy of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1828 (White 1993 and Josephy 1994).

During his first annual message to Congress in 1829, the newly elected President Jackson advocated the removal of Indians from their lands in the southeast and endorsed the preeminence of states'

rights to either Indian or federal laws. Later that year the Georgia legislature declared the Cherokee constitution invalid and after Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in May 1830 (Indians would "voluntarily" exchange their lands in the East for protected and forever guaranteed lands west of the Mississippi), prepared to distribute the Cherokees' land by lottery. Cherokee Chief John Ross sought an injunction in the United States Supreme Court, to halt both the extension of Georgia law over the Cherokees and the state's seizure of Indian lands. In 1831 Chief Justice John Marshall, in the case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, denied the injunction, because Indian tribes were dependent nations who could not sue in United States courts, but declared that only the federal government had sovereignty over the Indians and the disposition of their lands. A year later, in the case of *Worcester v. Georgia*, the Chief Justice ruled that the Cherokee nation was an autonomous political entity over which the state of Georgia had no claim without Cherokee consent by law or treaty. Upon learning of the chief justice's latest ruling, however, Jackson privately uttered his famous dictum, "John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it," and the president and the Jacksonian-controlled Congress looked the other way as Georgia defied the court's ruling (White, Josephy, Nabokov, and Nash 1992). When the states of Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee soon after extended the sovereignty of their laws over the Indian nations within their borders,

> . . . (t)he federal government held out removal as the only realistic hope for renewed security and sovereignty, and in desperation and anguish southern Indians were left to "choose." The large majority of Indians in the south had no desire to remove, but after 1832 they had no effective way to resist. In each nation there came to be those who saw removal as inevitable. Some viewed it as a way of escaping whites; some saw personal or factional gain in coopera-tion; some simply resigned themselves to obtaining the best price they could. And . . . federal negotiators, employing various degrees of coercion and fraud, obtained their removal treaties. The most blatantly fraudulent of all was the New Echota Treaty of 1835 with the Cherokees. Negotiated with the Ridge group, who represented only a small fraction of the nation, it was, as the Cherokee national council said, "a fraud upon the Cherokee people" (White 1993).

Many of the Cherokees refused to leave their eastern lands, however, and in 1837 and 1838 the United States Army simply rounded-up the vast majority of Cherokees and herded them west to "Indian Territory" of present-day Oklahoma (Eyewitness accounts later melded into one narrative told both of the suddenness with which the Indians were seized and the resigned dignity with which many accepted their fate:

> Families at dinner were startled by the sudden gleam of bayonets in the doorway and rose up to be driven with blows amid oaths along the trail that led to the stockade. Men were seized in their fields or going along the road, women were taken from their [spin-ning] wheels and children from their play. . . . To prevent escape the soldiers had been ordered to approach and surround each house, as far as possible, so as to come upon the occupants without warning. One old patriarch

> when thus surprised calmly called his children and grandchildren around him, and kneeling down bid them pray with him in their own language, while the astonished soldiers looked on in silence. Then rising he led the way into exile. A woman, on finding the house surrounded, went to the door and called up the chickens to be fed for the last time, after which taking her infant on her back and her other children by the hand, she followed her husband with the soldiers (White 1993).

Remembered by the Cherokees as the Trail of Tears (the road they traveled was the "road they cried"), the forced resettlement brought death to an estimated one-quarter of the approximately 16,000 who began the trek westward, due primarily to rampant disease and the scarcity of food and water. In addition, looters plundered the homes and graves they left behind, officials and soldiers overseeing the trek robbed many Cherokees of their personal property along the way, and the cost of the resettlement, which totaled nearly $6 million, was de-ducted from the $9 million allotted the Cherokee for their lands east of the Mississippi (White, Josephy, and Nash 1992).

Though the Cherokees endured perhaps the most tragic of the Indian resettlements, from the 1820–1840s the majority of Indians east of the Mississippi River were relocated to the West. Only remnants of the fragmented tribes endured in the Southeast, e.g., the Choctaw and Hooma in Mississippi, the Cherokee in North Carolina, and the Seminoles in Florida. Millions of acres of former Indian land throughout the Southeast was opened to white occupation, which helped fuel the coming economic expansion of the nation.

In the Indian Territory the relocated Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Seminoles, and Creeks began to rebuild their societies amidst the challenges of the new world. The Indian Appropriation Act of 1851 recognized as reservations the lands upon which the southeastern tribes were forcibly resettled; yet, the promises of inviolable western lands would, like the promises before, be broken (White 1993, Josephy 1994, and Nabokov 1993).

Inspired in part by the impulse of humanitarian reform, such as the popular writings of Helen Hunt Jackson, who depicted the injustices and cruelties inflicted upon Indians in *A Century of Dishonor* (1881) and *Ramona* (1884), but more so by the pressing need to satisfy the land hunger of Western settlers, Congress in 1887 passed the Dawes Severalty, or General Allotment, Act. This Act would guide the federal government's Indian policy until 1934. To assimilate Indians into mainstream American society, the Dawes Act provided each family head who agreed to abandon their tribal culture 160 acres of reservation land to cultivate and the prospect of full citizenship in the United States after a probationary period of 25 years. Surplus acres, of which there were millions, would be bought from the Indians by the United States and opened to settlement (the land rush of 1889 into the Indian Territory resulted in the formation of the state of Oklahoma). The land allotted the Indians, however, was often the least fertile and their unfamiliarity with the legal concept of holding land in severalty, possessing individual allotments of land in fee simple title, left many vulnerable to the chicanery of land hungry settlers. At the time the state of Oklahoma was admitted to the Union in 1907, which the federal government originally promised

would be the Indians alone for ". . . as long as the grass grows and the rivers run . . . ," Indians nationwide had lost nearly 60% of their reservation lands (Nabokov 1993, Josephy 1994, Nash 1992, and Deloria 1993).

In 1924 the Indian Citizenship Act conferred full citizenship upon the nearly one-third of the nation's Indians who had not yet accepted land allotments or complied with the provisions of any of the various 19th century ". . . treaties and statutes . . . baited with the promise of citizenship. . . ." (Nabokov 1993). But not until the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 did the nearly half-century of coerced assimilation end. The Indian Reorganization Act, the first formulated policy that solicited the input of Indians, reversed the practice of land allotment, recognized the principle of tribal ownership of reservation lands, and established the tribes as "dependent domestic nations" that exist on a government-to-government basis with both the states and the federal government, the foundation of Indian sovereignty today. Nearly two decades later federal Indian policy briefly reversed course and once again endorsed assimilation, as Congress in 1953 implemented a "termination" policy to end tribal autonomy and offered subsidies to those Indian families that left the reservations and relocated in cites. The political activism of the National Congress of American Indians, organized in 1944, compelled the Eisenhower administration to suspend the policy in 1958 and reaffirm for Indians the principles of self-government and self-determination, but it was not until 1970 that President Richard Nixon officially repudiated the termination policy (Deloria 1993).

Today, over 500 years after Columbus's landing, the intrinsic values of different cultures are widely recognized. Yet, the identity of perhaps the least-known Americans, the Indians, still resonates with the reality of how the Americans who were here first were displaced and subjugated by the those who came later to penetrate the wilderness and link the continent.

AFRICAN-AMERICANS: FROM SLAVERY TO EQUALITY

The notorious trans-Atlantic slave trade, which reached its peak during the 18th and early 19th centuries, dispersed millions of Africans throughout the Western Hemisphere. The first Africans arrived in colonial North America at Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 and scholars contend that British colonists initially recognized them as indentured servants. Their status, however, changed in 1641 when the Massachusetts colony sanctioned the enslavement of African laborers. Similarly, Maryland and Virginia authorized legal servitude in 1660, and by 1755 all 13 colonies had legally recognized chattel slavery (NPS 1995a).

Due to diverse climates and geographic conditions, legal bondage varied in colonial North America. In the North, most Africans labored on small farms. Those who lived in cities worked as personal servants or were hired out as domestics and skilled workers. Although northern colo-nists had little use for slave labor, they accumulated substantial profits from the lucrative slave trading industry. Converse-ly, southern colonies grew quite dependent on human bondage. Southern landowners often purchased African laborers for their tobacco, sugar, cotton, rice, and indigo plantations. By the late 18th century, slave labor became increasingly vital to the southern economy

and the demand for African workers contributed greatly to the steady increase of their population. This growth in population and the threat of insurrections induced colonial legislatures to pass legal codes that restricted the movement of enslaved Africans. While white colonists petitioned for inde-pendence from Great Britain, antislavery advocates also demanded human rights and liberty for all people, including slaves (NPS 1995a).

Shortly after the War of Independence, calls to abolish slavery and the slave trade generated increasingly widespread support. Led by Quakers and liberated African-Americans, the antislavery movement swayed some northern state legislatures to grant immediate manumissions to soldier-slaves and gradual emancipation to other enslaved Africans. Northern slaveholders allowed some bondsmen to purchase their freedom, while others petitioned for libera-tion through the courts. Slavery remained a vital element of southern society, however, and any opportunity to eliminate the institution nationwide ended in 1787 when the United States Constitution permitted the slave trade to continue until 1808 and protected involuntary servitude where it then existed (NPS 1995a).

The emergence of the cotton gin in 1793 revolutionized the production of cotton, further solidifying the institution of slavery in the South. “King Cotton” came to dominate the southern economy, as cotton production rose from approximately 13,000 bales in 1792 to more than 5 million bales by 1860. Increased cotton production necessitated an increase in slaves to work the fields, where men and women often toiled side-by-side, and the African-American population in the South also rose from approximately 700,000 in 1790 to nearly 4 million by 1860. By the mid-19th century, the majority of the nation’s cotton was raised in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, and nowhere in the antebellum South was the cotton economy more dominant than Natchez, Mississippi, which was “. . . the wealthiest town per capita in the United States . . .” on the eve of the Civil War (NPS 1995a and Hilliard 1994).

Slaves who were part of the urban black community in the South frequently worked as domestics or in business establishments and the South’s small segment of free blacks were comprised predominantly tradesmen and craftsmen, including carpenters, barbers, blacksmiths, dress-makers, and seamstresses, though free blacks also earned livings by peddling, fishing, farming, and chopping wood. One of the most notable members of the South’s free black community was William Johnson, a former slave who became a prosperous barber renowned for his busi-ness acumen and wealth. Emancipated in 1820 at the age of 11, Johnson was appren-ticed to a free black barber. Johnson went into business on his own in 1828, and was successful enough by the mid-1830s to take advantage of varied business oppor-tunities. He operated three barbershops in Natchez, where he employed free blacks and slaves, and he owned farmland culti-vated by slaves and white overseers (NPS 1993).

Although masters closely oversaw every aspect of their slaves’ lives, slaves retained some autonomy in their private family lives, in their relations with each other, and in their religious practices. Slaves endured the worst aspects of slavery through the strength of their social and cultural ties. A distinctive black culture arose, which provided meaning to life and transmitted values, attitudes, and beliefs throughout

the slave community. Yet, the yearning for freedom was ever strong, as James L. Bradley succinctly stated in 1835 in his autobiography:

> From the time I was fourteen years old, I used to think a great deal about freedom. It was my heart's desire; I could not keep it out of my mind. Many a sleepless night I have spent in tears, because I was a slave. . . . My heart ached to feel within me the life of liberty (NPS 1995a).

The brutality of slavery and the desire for personal freedom inspired many slaves to rebel against their conditions. Slave rebellions in the South, the most dramatic form of resistance, were few and unsuccessful, due to the control slave owners exerted over their slaves. The most prominent slave rebellion in the lower Delta region occurred near Baton Rouge in 1811. Four to five hundred slaves, led by the free mulatto Charles Dislondes, sent whites fleeing to New Orleans from the parishes of St. Charles and St. John until the slaves were routed by a contingent of U.S. Army regulars and militiamen. Over 60 slaves were killed during the rebellion, and those captured were beheaded, with their heads placed atop pikes on the road to New Orleans as a warning to other would-be rebels (Stewart 1996).

Slaves more commonly used flight as a form of resistance. Some slaves escaped and took refuge with Indians, who often welcomed the runaways as members of their communities. Others fled into unclaimed or secluded territories, e.g., the bayous of Louisiana, and formed *maroon* or free societies there. Still others fled northward or to Mexico and the Caribbean, often receiving food, shelter, and money along the way from a movement known collectively as the "Underground Railroad." Operating without formal organization, "conductors" of Underground Railroad stops, such as the Epps (Edwin) house in Bunkie, Louisiana, and the Jacob Burkle and Hunt-Phelan homes in Memphis, Tennessee, included both white and black abolitionists, of which one of the most renowned was Harriet Tubman, enslaved African-Americans, Indians, and members of such religious groups as the Quakers, Methodists, and Baptists (NPS 1995a).

At mid-century, the United States Congress attempted to reconcile sectional differences by passing the Compromise of 1850, which included a Fugitive Slave Law. In addition to legislating the return of runaway slaves, the act proclaimed that federal and state officials as well as private citizens must assist in their capture. As a result, northern states were no longer considered safe ha-vens for runaways and the law even jeop-ardized the status of freedmen. By the end of the decade, slavery had polarized the nation even further, as events such as the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the *Dred Scott Case* (1857), and the failed Harper's Ferry insurrection led by John Brown in 1859 eventually precipitated the nation's Civil War. While the Civil War captured the attention of the country, thousands of once enslaved African-Americans deserted southern plantations and cities and took refuge behind Union lines. With the assistance of more than 180,000 African-American soldiers and spies, the Union secured victory over the Confederacy in 1865. In the aftermath of the war, the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution liberated more than 4 million African-Americans (NPS 1995a).

Following the abolition of slavery, many of the South's newly freed African-Americans sought work in textile and tobacco factories, iron mills, and other industrial enterprises, where they were often prohibited from working as artisans, mechanics, and in other capacities where they competed with white labor. Others undertook sharecropping, striving to own the land they farmed. Sharecropping gradually stabilized labor relations in the cash poor South after the Civil War; however, sharecropping also preserved a semblance of the plantation system and its associated patterns of antebellum agriculture. Under sharecropping, land was divided into many small holdings, giving the illusion of small independent farms. But many small holdings together actually comprised single plantations, which, through foreclosures, gradually fell into the hands of creditors, who were white. Over the succeeding half-century, the old planter caste was simply replaced by a new class of large landowners (NPS 1993 and Kulikoff 1991).

What limited political and social gains African-Americans experienced during Reconstruction (1865-1877) were quickly overturned during the succeeding decades. Every Supreme Court decision affecting African-Americans before the turn-of-the-century furthered white supremacy. The *Civil Rights Cases* (1883), for example, nullified the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and the court's later separate but equal verdict, rendered in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), legitimized the "Jim Crow" era of segregation in the South. The *Plessy* decision upheld the constitutionality of a Louisiana statute requiring African-Americans and whites to ride in separate railroad cars, but was soon zealously applied to public facilities of all kinds and entire city blocks of housing, though the equality of separate African-American facilities was, more often than not, questionable (Stewart 1996, Garraty 1991, and Levinson 1991).

One response to such political, economic, and social oppression was emigration. Though some African-Americans were drawn to the African recolonization movement, far more opted for the western and northern regions of the United States. In 1879 over 20,000 African-Americans migrated from southern states to Kansas and other plains states. These "Exodusters" farmed homestead lands and founded a number of small communities. Decades later, thousands of the regions' African-American males served in the nation's armed forces during World War I, prompting a second great migration after the war, as African-Americans moved northward seeking opportunity in the large commercial and industrial centers of Chicago, Detroit, New York City, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. A similar migration occurred after World War II (Foner and Garraty 1991).

In the 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began focusing the nation's attention upon the status of African-Americans under law, addressing the inherent inequality of separate facilities and attacking the very idea of segregation itself. In addition, during 1934 a group of white and African-American sharecroppers organized the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) in Marked Tree, Arkansas (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991; Foner and Garraty 1991a and b). The landowners responded with terrorism and union members were flogged, jailed, shot, and some were killed. The wife of a sharecropper from Marked Tree wrote:

> We Garded our House and been on the scout untill we are Ware out, and Havenent any law to looks to, thay and the Land Lords hast all turned to nite Riding . . . thay shat up some House and have Threten our Union and Wont let us Meet at the Hall at all (Leuchtenburg 1963).

The STFU persevered, however, moving their union headquarters to Memphis. With a peak membership of 30,000, the STFU was the nation's first and largest interracial trade union. In additional to staging a successful cotton strike in 1936, the STFU maintained refuges for tenant farmers who were evicted for striking. The union also organized a farming cooperative, the Providence Farm, in Homes County, Mississippi, and later opened a second cooperative, the Hillhouse Farm, in nearby Cahoma County, where the first use of a mechanical cotton picker occurred. Later, some of the STFU's organizing skills benefited the civil rights movement.

The 1955 lynching of a 14-year-old African-American youth, Emmett Till, in Money, Mississippi, focused national attention upon the virulent racism of the South. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's momentous decision ordering the end of public school segregation, Brown, et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954), President Dwight G. Eisenhower — who had initially urged caution in implementing the *Brown* decision because he did not believe the hearts of men could be changed by law — sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, in the fall of 1957 to ensure the safety of nine African-American children enrolled at Central High School. In 1957 and 1960, Congress passed the first federal civil rights acts in nearly a century, rekindling a federal commitment to the African-American's right to vote, and a few years later Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the presi-dent and cofounder of the Southern Chris-tian Leadership Conference, observed that ". . . the law may not change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless" (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991)."

The life's work of King in Birmingham, Alabama, Atlanta, Georgia, and other racial hotspots during the 1950s and 1960s provided inspiration for African-Americans throughout the nation, as civil rights dominated the nation's domestic agenda during the early 1960s. President John F. Kennedy sent troops to the University of Mississippi in the fall of 1962 to protect an African-American student, James Meredith, who had been enrolled by order of a Federal court. The August 28, 1963, march on Washington D.C., brought approximately 250,000 demonstrators to the nation's capital, many of them delta citizens, again focusing the nation's attention on the issue of racial inequality in America (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991).

The increasing tempo of far-reaching change continued during the presidential administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. In June 1964 the Supreme Court, in a decision many believed to be of equal importance with the school desegregation ruling 10 years earlier, declared that both houses of state legislatures must be apportioned on a population basis to ensure that citizens are accorded the constitutional guarantee of equal protection under the law, ending the rural domination of many state Senates. Less than a month later, on July 2, 1964, President Johnson signed the most comprehensive civil rights act in the nation's history. The new act enlarged federal power to protect voting rights, to

provide open access for all to public facilities, to sue to end lagging school desegregation, and to ensure equal job opportunities in businesses and unions with more than 25 persons. In promoting the Civil Rights Act in his first state of the Union message earlier in the year, President Johnson said, "Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope, some because of their poverty and some because of their color, and all to many because of both." To lift the hopes of such people, President Johnson proposed declaring a ". . . war on poverty in America." Congress endorsed the war in August 1964 by appropriating nearly $1 billion for 10 antipoverty programs, such as a Job Corps to train underprivileged youths, a work training program to employ them, an adult education program, and a domestic peace corps, all to be administered by the newly created Office of Economic Opportunity (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991; Brinkley 1991).

Resistance to the gains in civil rights for Africa-Americans was formidable. Force and intimidation dating from the previous century, in defiance of the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, sustained the system of racial segregation until the civil rights acts of the 1960s. In 1866 race riots erupted in Memphis and Vicksburg, and on July 30 of the same year over 40 African-American delegates were killed in New Orleans during a meeting at the Mechanic Institute Building to reconvene the state's constitutional convention. In 1873 over 300 African-Americans were killed by white supremists in Grant Parish, Louisiana, the result of a disputed election, in what has been called ". . . the worst incident of mass racial violence in the Reconstruction period (Stewart 1996; Galmon 1997).

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which was founded by former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forest in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866, and other similar groups, such as the Knights of the White Camelia and the Boys of 76, roamed the countryside, hooded or otherwise, terrorizing African-Americans and their supporters in the name of white supremacy. Over succeed-ing decades, the KKK underwent sporadic surges of popularity, as during the 1920s when the organization added anti-immigrant and anti-Semitism to its litany of hate. In 1954, the KKK re-emerged more determined than ever to stop integration, following the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown* decision, which also spurred the formation of White Citizen Councils throughout the South. The first meeting of a White Citizens Council, whose members considered themselves to be more respectable than those of the KKK but who were just as adamantly opposed to integration, occurred in Indianola, Mississippi in July, 1954. Byron De La Beckwith, who assassinated civil rights leader Medger Evers in Jackson, Mississippi in June, 1963 was a member of both the KKK and a White Citizens Council (Stewart 1996; Carson; 1991; Trelease 1991).

The murders of three civil rights volunteers workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi in June, 1964 increased public support for the growing racial equality movement (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991; Trelease 1991). Such tragedies also strengthened the resolve of African-Americans in their quest for racial equality, as civil rights leader Stokely Carmichael noted:

> They killed them, but they can't kill the summer, and what we're doing to do this

> summer. They can't kill our spirit, only our bodies. They'll find out what they did when they murdered our people, our brothers. They'll find that they made us strong, that we'll beat them sooner, because of what they've done. The whole nation will rally round — but even more important, we'll rally round (Coles 1972).

Other examples further set the tone of those tumultuous 1960s civil rights struggles. In 1964 Fannie Lou Hamer of Ruleville, Mississippi drew national attention for her work as a civil rights organizer and her futile attempts to seat the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates at the Democratic Party's presidential nomination convention in Atlantic City. Throughout the summer of the same year, Freedom Schools staffed by northerners enrolled thousands of young African-Americans and voter registration drives during the summer, which was known as Freedom Summer, brought many disfranchised African-Americans to the ballot box for the first time (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991; Foner and Garraty 1991). A Mississippi sheriff objected to the presence of civil-rights workers from the North, however, whom he looked upon as busybodies and interlopers, declaring: "Ninety-five per cent of our blacks are happy." In response some 20 rural African-Americans in his county wrote or dictated letters indicating grievances. One wrote:

> In our schools we don't have the books the whites have. We can't get to learn anything. The colored people is afraid to tell you all we is not happy because we're scared of losing the jobs we have. When we go to the gas stations we don't have any bathrooms. We're glad that the white people are coming down from the North and that they are thinking of our welfare. We work 12 hours a day and only get $3 pay. Sure, we're inferior. The white folks over us every way (Current 1967).

The failure of many Southern states to enforce the voting registration provisions of the Civil Rights Act resulted in an upsweep of civil rights demonstrations, of which one of the most notable occurred in Alabama. In February 1965 King and over 700 other African-Americans were arrested in Selma, and a month later Alabama state troopers frustrated an attempted civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, the state capital. On March 20 President Johnson ordered the Alabama National Guard to protect the marchers, after Governor George Wallace earlier refused to protect them, and a procession of approximately 25,000 African-Americans and whites from all over the country began (Stewart 1996).

In response, Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act, signed by President Johnson on August 6, 1965, which suspended all voter registration literacy tests. In addition, the act empowered federal examiners to regis-ter all who qualified age, residence, and objective educational requirements. The act also authorized the Attorney General to file suits testing the constitutionality of poll taxes in states where it survived. In April, 1966 the last poll tax, in Mississippi, was overturned (Stewart 1996; Carson 1991).

The civil rights movement thus came to full bloom in the 1960s, though African-Americans as recently as 1973 worked and marched to bring racially based injustices to an end in Cairo, Illinois, chronicled by Preston Ewing, Jr., in his recently published *Let My People Go* (1996), and continue to strive for racial equality today. The valiant civil rights struggles are memorialized in communities throughout

the delta region, such as in the county administration building of Port Gibson, Mississippi. Museum and cultural centers in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and Helena, Arkansas, also showcase the achievements of the region's African-American citizens. The Lorraine Motel in Memphis, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968, is a poignant memorial to Dr. King as well as to others involved in the 1950s-1960s civil rights movement.

Few groups of people have had more impact on the cultural heritage of the lower Mississippi River delta than its African-American citizens. From Missouri to Louisiana the legacy of black contributions to delta history and culture can be found in the character and lay of the land, the communities and heritage. Particularly in the South, extant evidence of African-American labor, both enslaved and free, can be seen everywhere, from the construction of early levees, to the endless fields of cotton and sugar cane, to the antebellum mansions of Louisiana and Mississippi.

THE DELTA ECONOMY

TRADE ON THE RIVER

The Mississippi River first served the Delta region as a transportation corridor for Indians who used dugouts and canoes to conduct trade and travel up and down the river. Trappers and hunters then brought the European fur trade to the Delta in the late 1600s. The Delta region supplied naval stores such as timber, tar, pitch, and other raw materials to the European colonial powers. Europeans, primarily the Spanish and French, and later the Americans, followed their lead and used the river for moving people and goods. By the 1720s, New Orleans was rapidly developing as a center of international commerce.

From the earliest days of settlement, the natural bounty of the continent's interior included cotton, rice, sugar, tobacco, indigo, and whiskey. Keelboats, rafts, canoes, and other assorted craft made their way to Natchez and New Orleans from the north. Former Kentuckian Abraham Lincoln developed his first impressions of slavery when he made a flatboat trip to New Orleans in the late 1820s. New Orleans became an early center for small craft construction, and even more importantly the point of transfer between small rivercraft and oceangoing ships.

The steamboat era dramatically transformed the Delta region. In 1811 the sidewheeler *New Orleans* traveled from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. The next year this vessel entered upon a profitable career of fairly regular service between New Orleans and Natchez. Although the War of 1812 delayed the proliferation of steamboats on the Mississippi River, soon after they carried far more cargo on the river than all the flatboats, barges, and other primitive craft combined. People living along the river often sold firewood and other necessities to the steamboats and much of the labor employed cutting wood was provided by slaves.

As scores of steamboats churned upstream from New Orleans, the goods they transported helped tie the southern and western reaches of the United States to the East, in outlook as well as in economic practice. Besides traveling up and down the Mississippi, people began crossing the river on ferries for jobs and trade opportunities in the early 19th century. During the 1830s, riverboat gambling developed and such communities as Cairo, Illinois; Hickman, Kentucky; and Helena, Arkansas, sprang up along the river. Other, more established towns and cities along the river also grew as a result of the steamboat era, such as Ste. Genevieve, Cape Girardeau, Memphis, Vicksburg, Natchez, and Baton Rouge grew.

Starting in the 1830s, the introduction of railroads promoted major changes in the way Americans transported products and people, in turn dictating the success or failure of numerous town and cities throughout the Delta region. Several railroads reached the Mississippi River before the Civil War, many more after. Larger river towns reacted by building bridges to attract the rail networks. In 1866, Eads Bridge in St. Louis was the first bridge erected over the Mississippi. Old river-based towns such as Hickman, Helena, and Cairo, among others, declined in the late 19th century, while the towns that could attract the railroads to cross the

Mississippi boomed. Because the Civil War had disrupted and in some instances destroyed traditional north/south lines of commerce and communication, the Mississippi River's economic importance shifted from that of transportation leader before the war to a supportive role after the war, as the scene of expansion and development movement westward across the Great Plains.

As a promoter of economic change the Mississippi River has rebounded in the 20th century to regain an important role as the transportation backbone of the lower Mississippi Delta region. Powerful tugs that propel large barges are the direct heirs of steamboats, even as thousands of visitors cruise the river on modern re-created steamboats. The barge fleets ship vast amounts of oil-based products, construction materials, and farm products up and down the river. The lower Mississippi River Delta also has a parallel and bisecting system of federally funded interstate highways used by huge trucks to transport goods throughout the region. No community smaller than 50,000 residents is located more than a few miles from this highway grid. In addition, the Delta states made huge investments in highways during the post World War II decades, to link communities and improve farm to market roads, and major highway improvement programs continue to this date throughout the Delta region.

AGRICULTURE: THE REGION'S TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC MAINSTAY

For over two centuries, agriculture has been the mainstay of the Delta economy. Sugar cane and rice were introduced to the region from the Caribbean in the 18th century. Sugar production was centered in southern Louisiana, along with rice, and later in the Arkansas Delta. Early agriculture also included limited tobacco production in the Natchez area and indigo in lower Mississippi. What began as back bending land clearing by yeoman farmers supported by their extensive families, quickly developed into a labor intensive plantation system based initially on Native American and later on African slave labor in the 18th century.

The emergence of the cotton gin in 1793 revolutionized the production of cotton and by the early 1800s cotton had become the Delta's premier crop, and would remain so until the Civil War. Though cotton planters believed that the alluvial soils of the Mississippi Delta region would always renew, the agricultural boom from the 1830s to the late 1850s caused extensive soil exhaustion and erosion. Yet, lacking agricultural research, planters continued to raise cotton the same way after the Civil War.

Following the Civil War, sharecropping and tenant farming replaced the slave-dependent, labor intensive plantation system. Sharecropping was a system of social and racial control used by post-Civil War plantation owners (often merchants, bankers, and industrialists). This labor system inhibited the use of progressive agricultural techniques. In the late 19th century, the clearing and drainage of wetlands, especially in Arkansas and the Missouri "Bootheel," increased lands available for tenant farming and sharecropping. Lower Delta agriculture evolved during the 20th century into large farms owned by nonresident corporate entities. These heavily mechanized, low labor, and capital-intensive farm entities, consisting

of hundreds and thousands of acres, produce market-driven crops such as cotton, sugar, rice, and soybeans.

During the Great Depression of the 30s thousands of tenant farmers and sharecroppers lost their agrarian-based employment. For example, during the 1930s Arkansas lost 36.5% of its sharecroppers; Louisiana 19.8%; and Mississippi 7.3%. Under the New Deal, Federal policy makers earmarked the South as the nation's number one economic problem area; however, Federal work relief programs were of more benefit to unem-ployed whites than African-Americans. Although slowed and hindered by tradi-tional racially based politics and govern-ance, the employment of New Deal social engineering, such as the Resettlement Administration (RA) and later the Farm Security Administration (FSA), in the Lower Mississippi River Delta led to the establishment of a few agrarian communi-ties in Mississippi, Arkansas, and the Missouri Bootheel, to assist disposed tenant farmers with public housing, access to medical assistance, and stores. The FSA was one of the few Federal New Deal programs that tried to provide a level playing field for whites and African-Americans alike. It was the first agency to do anything substantial for the tenant farmer, the sharecropper, and the migrant. Those less fortunate, who attempted to organize against the local power structure, were forced to the open road in southern Missouri and Arkansas in the mid-1930s. Dorothea Lange's poignant photographs of the displaced chronicles those troubled times.

During the 1920–1930s, in the aftermath of the increasing mechanization of Delta farms, displaced whites and African-Americans began to leave the land and move to towns and cities. It was not until the Depression years of the 1930s that large scale farm mechanization came to the region, but farm mechanization did not occur overnight in the Delta. In 1945 the percentage of U.S. farm operators reporting tractors was 30.5%, yet in Louisiana there were only 6.9%; in Arkansas 6.6%; and in Mississippi 4.1%. The mechanization of agriculture and the availability of domestic work outside the Delta spurred the migra-tion of Delta residents out of the region. Farming was unable to absorb the available labor force and entire families moved together. Satellite communities comprised of Delta emigrants arose on the south and west sides of Chicago, for example**,** and families and cultures went back and forth.

During the succeeding war years, many Delta residents followed the lure of the burgeoning defense industry to the north and far west. The Delta region lost thou-sands of residents in the 1930s–1950s, as rural-based people left for economic opportunities in other regions. In the 1940s over 7,000,000 southerners left the South permanently. The greatest period of emi-gration of southerners occurred during the four years of World War II, when 1,600,000 southerners moved north and west or left for the military, about a third of this number African-Americans. A similar population movement also occurred in the Lower Mississippi Delta Region.

From the late 1930s through the 1950s, the Delta experienced an agriculture boom, as wartime needs followed by reconstruction in Europe expanded the demand for the Delta region's farm products. Unfor-tunately this boom period was also marked by extensive soil erosion, particularly in Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, and Illinois. As the mechanization of agricul-

ture continued, women continued to leave the fields and go into service work, while the men drove tractors and worked on the farms. From the 1960s–1990s, thousands of small farms and dwellings in the Delta region were absorbed by large corporate-owned agribusinesses, and the smallest Delta communities have stagnated. Scattered remnants of the region's agrarian heritage are scattered along the highways and byways of the lower Delta. Larger com-munities have survived by fostering economic development in education, government, and medicine. Other endeavors such as catfish, poultry, rice, corn, and soybean farming have assumed greater importance. Today, the monetary value of these crops rivals that of cotton production in the lower Mississippi Delta.

OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The hardwood timber industry developed before the Civil War but boomed during the late 19th century. Midwestern timber companies exploited the forests almost to extinction and by the early 20th century the cypress forests were virtually depleted. The timber industry continued to be an impor-tant segment of the lower Delta economy until the mid-20th century, but single species tree farms on upland areas provided most of the timber output.

The petroleum industry developed in the South as early as 1902, first at Spindletop in Texas and later spreading to the east Texas oilfields in the early 1930s. It was not until 1946 that the first offshore drilling rig brought in a successful well south of Morgan City, Louisiana. Offshore oil drilling proved so successful that it began supplanting the more traditional economic pursuits of fishing and farming. Initially, the offshore oil industry employed predominantly whites, but in succeeding decades African-Americans and Indians have also found employment there.

The petrochemical industry came to the Delta region during the 1930s, as refineries sprang up along the Mississippi River, a major transportation corridor. The petrochemical industry has significantly changed the Lower Mississippi Delta region. In addition to bringing many external corporations to the region, the petrochemical industry spurred the growth of local infrastructure to support its production, research, and development activities.

An array of petrochemical plants dots the river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. This strip is known by its critics as Cancer Alley, for the environmental impact such concentrated petrochemical produc-tion causes. However, this industry has generated thousands of jobs for lower Delta residents.

During the preceding decades, the lower Mississippi Delta region sought to increase the region's industrial base. Memphis became one of the lower Delta region's few industrial centers with the establishment of Ford and International Harvester plants. Mississippi initiated a state-sponsored program in 1936 to attract new industry. From 1936 to 1955, 138 industries located in Mississippi as a result of the state's active recruiting and willingness to fund bond initiatives, such as the $4,750,000 made available in 1951 for the construction of the Greenville Mills. The Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company located a large plant at Natchez as a result of a generous subsidy. This company gave a new look and a new economic stimulus to the old cotton and river city. Other

industries in Mississippi produce clothing, furniture, paper, glassware, light bulbs, building supplies, and farm implements.

In the 1990s the pursuit of gaming as a new form of economic endeavor is transforming both the river towns and landscapes of the lower Mississippi Delta region, as the spread of gaming can be viewed along the entire river corridor. While communities such as New Orleans and Natchez have long been tourism promoters, small towns and even rural areas are now also sharing in the apparent economic bonanza. For example, Tunica County, Mississippi, once known as the nation's poorest county, now boasts seven major casinos, which have also sparked local economic development with new roads, jobs, and an enhanced tax base. This economic windfall resulted from the high levels of disposable income contemporary Americans possess, as well as, the desire for leisure time activities. Although gaming is becoming a significant piece of the Delta region's service economy, the long-term socioeconomic impacts of the industry have yet to be evaluated.

THE CIVIL WAR

OVERVIEW OF THE EVENTS

The following is excerpted from the recently published brochure *The Thousand Mile Front: Civil War in the Lower Mississippi Valley*. The brochure was the result of a collective effort of Civil War historians, universities, preservationists, tourism officials, and private, nonprofit partners. It provides an overview of the vital events that took place in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. (Individual states have Civil War maps and more specific information available.) While visiting these sites to learn more about the war that forged this country, people are reminded of the importance of protecting and preserving these sites for future generations as they represent a major part of our American heritage.

The Lower Mississippi River Valley was the most critical theater of the Civil War. The Mississippi River served as the major interstate highway of 19th-century America. The river enabled people to transport goods from St. Louis and Pittsburgh through New Orleans to the world.

Rivers were extremely valuable as transportation networks, but beginning in the 1840s, railroad construction linked major cities that were unconnected by water. Both sides realized the significance of these transportation networks and knew they must control them to win the war.

Early in the war, Union General Winfield Scott envisioned a broad sweeping plan to crush the rebellion. His strategy known as the "Anaconda Plan" reflected the importance of the Mississippi River in the overall strategy of the war. Scott's plan called for blockading the Southern coast and a drive down the Mississippi River to cut the South in two.

Regional diversity of the economy controlled national politics. Over the years, compromises maintained a delicate balance in Congress between Free and Slave states. With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which allowed territories to decide for themselves whether to become Free or Slave states, the spirit of compromise was lost. Southerners feared this change would forever rob them of their way of life.

Agriculture was the foundation of the economy of America, but its practice varied between the North and the South. The South was dependent on a plantation economy for its livelihood, but it also relied on Northern factories for everything it needed to grow, refine, and market its crops. Northerners forged the plows that broke Southern earth, Northerners built the steamboats that shipped Southern crops, and Northerners purchased the final product.

The election of Abraham Lincoln as president in 1860 changed the lives of all Americans almost overnight and the nation itself forever. Lincoln's belief that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," created a sense of crisis in the South and brought the issues that divided the nation into sharp focus.

South Carolina seceded from the Union soon after the election and was joined by other states to form the Confederate States of America before Lincoln took office.

War erupted when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 12, 1861. Following these opening shots, both the North and South quickly raised troops, organized armies, and began to develop strategies for victory.

The Mississippi River became the focal point in the war plans of both sides. "The Father of Waters" had moved lumber, wheat, corn, and meat from the Midwest, cotton and tobacco from the Upper South to New Orleans, and European goods upriver. Control of the Mississippi and the rivers that flow into it would allow the North to move troops and supplies into the South while crippling the South's ability to survive. The South needed to protect itself, especially the rich farmland of the Mississippi River Valley, from Northern invasion. The Mississippi, carrier of commerce, became the bearer of dreams as a divided nation struggled with itself over its future.

With Missouri securely under Union control, both sides massed troops — the North along the Ohio River and the South across Tennessee. Newly commissioned Union General Ulysses S. Grant was stationed in Cairo, Illinois, to watch Southern troops in Tennessee. Each side waited and watched, careful not to tip the balance in Kentucky toward the other. On September 1, 1861, Confederate General Leonidas Polk seized the Kentucky river-towns of Hickman and Columbus. He began erecting fortifications at Columbus to defend the river as part of a Confederate defense line that stretched across southern Kentucky from Columbus to Cumberland Gap. Grant quickly countered by occupying Paducah and Smithland. The watching and waiting was over.

Late in 1861, Union land and naval forces launched a key element of the "Anaconda Plan" by simultaneously heading south from Paducah, Kentucky, and north from the Gulf of Mexico to wrestle control of the Lower Mississippi River Valley from the Confederates. The initial engagement at Belmont, Missouri, provided valuable experience for Grant who became the most important Union general of the war.

Moving along the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, Union forces seized Forts Henry and Donelson, opening the pathway for invasion of the Deep South. Continuing their advance, the Federals gained victory in the bloody battle at Shiloh in April, at Corinth in May, and having forced the surrender of Island No. 10 in the Mississippi River, seized Memphis by early June.

Entering the mouth of the Mississippi River, the ships of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, commanded by Union Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut, fought past Confederate Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Left defenseless, New Orleans, the largest city in the Confederacy, surrendered in late April. Moving steadily upriver, Farragut captured Baton Rouge and Natchez and steamed on to Vicksburg.

Responding to Farragut's demand for surrender, Confederate Lt. Col. James L. Autrey, the post commander at Vicksburg, answered, "Mississippians don't know, and refuse to learn, how to surrender to an enemy." Shelling the city until late July, Union ships and gunboats were unable to force surrender of Vicksburg. Sickness and rapidly falling waters forced the Federals to withdraw to deeper water below Baton Rouge.

Upriver, Federal inactivity in and around Memphis during the summer enabled

Confederate forces to counterattack to regain lost portions of the Lower Mississippi River Valley. These efforts ended in failure at Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge. General Ulysses S. Grant then directed his forces in a two-pronged advance on Vicksburg. One wing marched south from LaGrange and Grand Junction, Tennessee, into north Mississippi, while the other wing, under General William T. Sherman, pushed rapidly downriver from Memphis to seize Vicksburg. Cavalry under Confederate General Earl Van Dorn sacked Grant's supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi, and troopers under General Nathan Bedford Forrest cut Union supply lines in Tennessee forcing the Northerners back to Memphis.

On Christmas Eve, the flotilla carrying Sherman's troops arrived near Vicksburg. A warning of his approach interrupted a festive gathering at he Balfour House. Declaring, "This ball is at an end. The enemy is coming down river," Confederate General Martin Luther Smith, the garrison commander, ordered his troops to man their batteries. Landing north of the city near the mouth of Chickasaw Bayou, Sherman ordered his troops forward saying, "We will lose 5,000 men before we take Vicksburg, and may as well lose them here as anywhere else." As his soldiers were hurled back with bloody loss, his words proved prophetic.

Unable to take Vicksburg, Union forces began 1863 by moving up the Arkansas River and capturing the Confederate garrison at Arkansas Post. After a series of ill-fated bayou expeditions during the winter months, Grant boldly launched his army on a march through the northeastern corner of Louisiana from Milliken's Bend in search of a favorable point to cross the Mississippi River below Vicksburg. Union gunboats and transports battled their way past Confederate shore batteries at Vicksburg and rendezvoused with Grant. In the largest amphibious landing in American military history up to that time, the Union commander hurled his army across the river at Bruinsburg and pushed inland.

Overcoming Confederate resistance at Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, and Big Black River Bridge, Federal troops captured the capital of Mississippi and reached Vicksburg. Failing to take the city by storm, Grant's forces encircled the city and laid siege. Cut off from the outside world, the citizens and soldiers of Vicksburg, many of whom sought refuge in caves, withstood the constant bombardment of Union guns for 47 days. On July 4, 1863, the city surrendered to Grant. Ironically, a Confederate attack on Helena, Arkansas, intended to ease the pressure on Vicksburg, was bloodily repulsed on the same day. When Port Hudson, Louisiana, the last remaining Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River, fell five days later, the Confederacy was split in two and President Abraham Lincoln declared, "The Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea."

To strengthen their hold on the Mississippi River, Union troops moved quickly from Vicksburg to drive Confederate forces that had assembled near Jackson from the state. Strategic points along the river were garrisoned by black troops, most of whom had been slaves just weeks before joining the Union army. With the Mississippi River secured, Northern armies advanced deep into the interiors of Mississippi and Louisiana in 1864. In Mississippi Sherman advanced across the state from Vicksburg to Meridian, first demonstrating his con-

cept of total war, which he later used more effectively in Georgia and the Carolinas. West of the Mississippi River, Union General Nathaniel P. Banks advanced up the Red River of Louisiana along with naval forces under Union Admiral David Dixon Porter and was defeated at Mansfield by Confederate General Richard Taylor and forced to withdraw. A Union army from Little Rock, moving to join Banks, was also soundly defeated near Camden, Arkansas, and forced to retreat. The Lower Mississippi River Valley was the scene of no major military operations for the remainder of the war.

A key element of this Union success was the use of a powerful new weapon: black soldiers. In September 1862, President Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation which would free slaves in those areas still in active rebellion against the government on January 1, 1863. The decree expanded the war aims from preservation of the Union to include the abolition of slavery.

The proclamation paved the way for blacks to formally enlist in the Union forces. The first major action of blacks in uniform was at Port Hudson, Louisiana, on May 23, 1863, when the First and Third Native Guards stormed the Confederate defenses, suffering severe losses. Two weeks later, black troops successfully defended Grant's supply base at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, against a determined attack by Confederate infantry. These engagements firmly answered the question of whether the freedmen would fight. For the remainder of the war black soldiers fought on fields of battle across the land and garrisoned strategic posts along the Mississippi River. More than 300,000 blacks served in the army and navy of the United States during the Civil War, 16 of whom were awarded the Medal of Honor.

The fall of the Mississippi River into Union hands was disastrous for the Confederacy. A permanent Southern nation would never exist. Divided in two and cut off from vital supplies, the confederacy was doomed in the coils of the Anaconda.

Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman's effort in the West made Union victory inevitable. The United States now had military leaders whose experience in the Western Theater had given them the vision to lead them to ultimate victory.

The military effort along the Thousand Mile Front now shifted east to concentrate on a hundred-mile front from the Wilderness past Richmond to Petersburg and finally to Appomattox.

The Civil War changed not only the South but the nation. War ravaged the South, destroying railroads, factories, and homes. The end of the Civil War brought and uneasy peace, but was followed by one of the most traumatic periods in American history — Reconstruction.

ILLINOIS

Background Stories

Although no major conflicts were fought on its soil, Illinois contributed mightily to a nation divided. It funneled more troups than any other state into distant Southern, Eastern, and Western battlefields. Cairo, the state's southernmost city, was especially significant as a staging area for manpower and materials flowing into the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys.

Leadership was Illinois' major contribution. Chief among those meriting special distinction were abolitionist journalist Elijah Lovejoy; Generals Ulysses S. Grant, and John A. Logan. Most noteworthy was President Abraham Lincoln.

Places of Interest

At Springfield visitors can see the Old State House where Lincoln's "House Divided" speech was delivered; his law office; the only home he ever owned; the family church pew, the depot where he departed to lead a troubled nation; and the tomb where his remains rest.

Associated sites of interest in the central and southcentral portion of the state are the Lincoln Trail Memorial in Lawrenceville; Lincoln's log cabin site in Charleston; Vandalia's Old Statehouse; and the courthouse of Lincoln (formerly Postville), Mt. Pulaski, and Metamora. Another site is the David Davis mansion in Bloomington.

Along the Mississippi River, visitors can view the Lovejoy and Confederate monuments and the ruins of the horrendous Confederate prison in Alton. Farther south are the General John A. Logan Museum in Murphysboro and the Thebes Courthouse in Ulin. Also the site of the Lincoln-Douglas debate is in Jonesboro and a Civil War Memorial in Vienna.

As the great rivers narrow toward their meeting point in Cairo, visitors can walk among the fallen at Mound City National Cemetery. Cairo's historic district was the place where soldiers and materials were assembled, waiting their ultimate assignments. On Washington Avenue, Saffort Library houses a treasure of Civil War documents. The Customs House museum houses the desk of General Grant among its memorabilia. Finally, visitors can watch the rivers meet at Fort Defiance Park.

Illinois gave its most courageous sons and daughters to this war that split the nation.

KENTUCKY

Background Stories

The Bluegrass State claims as native sons and daughters many of the leading figures of the Civil War era — Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln and Jefferson Davis. There is much to learn about the Lincolns and their native state Kentucky. The Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Sties and Lincoln Museum are near Hodgenville. Other Lincoln sites in Kentucky are the Lincoln Boyhood Home at Knob Creek; Washington County Courthouse; Lincoln Homestead State Park and adjacent Mordecai Lincoln House; and the Mary Todd Lincoln House in Lexington. There is an impressive bronze statue of Lincoln in the state capitol, as well as one of his adversary, Jefferson Davis, who was also born in Kentucky at Fairview, now a state historic site.

Kentucky was a state of divided loyalties and families were torn apart when sending 90,000 troops to the Union and 35,000 to the Confederacy.

Nowhere was this division more evident than in the "First Family." Several members of Mary Todd Lincoln's family fought for the South. Another family similarly divided was that of U.S. Senator John Crittenden whose two sons were generals on opposite sides. Some historians even say that the ensuing family feuds, such as the Hatfields and the

McCoys, carried on the war in Kentucky long after its official end.

Places of Interest

Antebellum life is also depicted at Riverside, the Farnsley-Moreman Landing, Bardstown' Federal Hill (better known as the legendary "My Old Kentucky Home"), and Waveland in Lexington. Also in Lexington is Ashland, the home of Henry Clay, another of Kentucky's influential sons, who helped forge the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850 that delayed the Civil War.

LOUISIANA

Background Studies

The gentlewomen of New Orleans reacted violently to the military occupation of their city by Union troops. Many of them displayed their defiance by wearing emblems on their clothing showing support for the Confederacy. Some verbally abused and hurled objects at Union soldiers. Finally, when the contents of a chamber pot were dumped from a balcony and onto the head of Admiral Farragut, Union General Ben Butler issued "Order Number 28," which promised to treat the women "as a woman of the town plying her avocation."

The order greatly insulted the citizens of New Orleans, and, in fact, drew a world-wide reaction — mostly condemning Butler's bold action. But, after the order was issued, most all of the insults and displays of hatred and contempt were halted.

Places of Interest

Once the largest and wealthiest city in the Confederacy, New Orleans offers visitors the opportunity to walk in the paths of the Union and Confederate soldiers and the citizens of yesteryear. A short distance south of New Orleans, visitors can see Fort Jackson, a restored, brick fort with earthworks still visible today. Several other Civil War sites in New Orleans are open to the public, such as the United States Customs House, Butler's first headquarters; the Old U.S. Mint and the Cabildo, part of the Louisiana State Museum, and many homes in an around the French Quarter.

Confederate Memorial Hall houses one of the largest collections of Confederate artifacts. Another significant New Orleans site is Metairie Cemetery, the final resting place for three Confederate generals — P.G.T. Beauregard, Richard Taylor, and John Bell Hood. Christ Church Cathedral on tree-shaded St. Charles Avenue holds the remains of General Leonidas Polk, commonly referred to as "the Fighting Bishop."

Outside of New Orleans, Louisiana has more than 100 Civil War related sites, ranging from the Red River campaign throughout southcentral Louisiana to Grant's March in the northeastern corner of the state, to numerous skirmishes and raids across the state, to antebellum homes, museums, and trails of historic markers.

One of the more significant Civil War sites in Louisiana is Port Hudson, which surrendered on July 9, 1863, severing the last link between the eastern part of the Confederacy and the Trans-Mississippi. From May 23 to July 9, 1863, Confederate soldiers held off a Union force twice its

strength during the longest siege in American military history.

The Battle of Port Hudson was one of the first battles in which freed blacks served as soldiers engaged in combat on the side of the Union. During the Civil War, more than 24,000 blacks from Louisiana joined the Union army, the largest black contingent from any state. The 1st Regiment Louisiana Native Guard, organized in September 1862, was the first black regiment in the U.S. Army. Louisiana's black soldiers distinguished themselves in several battles, particularly at Port Hudson and Milliden's Bend. Seven Medals of Honor were awarded to white and black Louisianians who fought for the Union.

MISSOURI

Background Stories

In 1820 Missouri gained national attention as the focus of the Missouri Compromise. It was the northernmost slave state in the Mississippi River valley, and when its neighbor Kansas wanted to enter the Union in 1854 as a free state, trouble erupted along the border. As Missourians tried to influence internal politics in Kansas, random violence became common place. Missouri guerrillas and Kansas jayhawkers raided and killed at will. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 would legitimize the killing that had plagued Missouri for years.

Union General Nathaniel Lyon, an ardent abolitionist, commanded all Union troops in the state. Union General Nathaniel Lyon, an ardent abolitionist, commanded all Union troops in the state. Former Governor Sterling "Pap" Pierce became the commander of the pro secession Missouri State Guard. The two sides met at Wilson's Creek in August of 1861. Lyon boldly attacked the Missouri State Guard that had been joined by a larger Confederate force, and even though he lost the battle and his life, he succeeded in keeping the state under Union control.

Although Missouri remained under Union control for the rest of the war, it provided troops to both sides, pitting neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, and father against son. Guerrilla warfare reigned over the state for the remainder o the war during which time William Quantrill, Bloody Bill Anderson, and Frank and Jesse James began their infamous careers. A unified Confederate force was not seen in Missouri again until late 1864 when Sterling Price failed in a desperate attempt to regain control of the state.

Places of Interest

Fort Davidson State Historic Site in Pilot Knob hosts a visitor center and contains remains of Union fortifications. At the park visitors can get a real sense of the battle on September 27, 1864. Civil War markers at Belmont and the Cape Girardeau Battlefield offer other opportunities for tourists to appreciate the important role Missouri played during the Civil War.

TENNESSEE

Background Stories

At first reluctant to secede, Tennessee became one of the bloodiest killing grounds of the Civil War. Proud of their identity as volunteers who had fought for the United States in every American war, many Tennesseans did not desire to leave the Union. Divided into three distinct geographic regions by the Tennessee

River, the citizens of the state were not united on the issues of slavery, secession, or Civil War. Following the surrender of Ft. Sumter and President Lincoln's call for troops, Tennesseans endorsed secession.

The second most populated state in the South, Tennessee was the geographical heart of the Confederacy and held immense strategic military importance. Located in the state was a large percentage of the South's ironworks, munitions factories, gunpowder mills, and copper mines, making the region the largest concentrated area for the production of war materials in the Confederacy. Tennessee provided more mules and horses, corn, and wheat, than any other Confederate state east of the Mississippi. Through Tennessee ran the South's main east-west rail lines, the western Confederacy's major north-south lines, and the key rail links between Virginia, the South Atlantic, and the West. Passing through or bordering on Tennessee, three important western rivers, the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland, were available to traffic commerce, war materials, and armed forces. Linked by this network of rivers and railroads, the communities of Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga served as important centers of manufacturing, communications, and trade within the region. If not effectively defended, the three western rivers and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad provided avenues of military invasion of the Deep South for the combined forces of the Union army and navy.

As both sides grappled to control the Confederate heartland, each was attracted by Tennessee's valuable transportation corridors and strategic location. Over 1,460 military actions occurred within the state during four long years of war, a number second only to Virginia. The last Confederate state to secede, Tennessee became the first Southern state to be readmitted to the Union after the war.

Places of Interest

Visitors to Tennessee can follow the path of invading armies to the bloody battlefields at Fort Donelson National Battlefield and Shiloh National Military Park; or ride with Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest on his cavalry raids in West Tennessee; and walk the corridors of the capitol where the Ordinance of Secession was passed.